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### *Section I*

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# Introduction

## **What Is the Purpose of This Plan?**

This document presents Georgia's river basin management plan for the Ocmulgee River, which is being produced as a part of Georgia's River Basin Management Planning (RBMP) approach. The purpose of this plan is to provide relevant information on the Ocmulgee River basin characteristics, describe the status of water quality and quantity in the Ocmulgee River basin, identify present and future water resource demands, present and facilitate the implementation of water protection efforts, and enhance stakeholder understanding and involvement in basin planning.

This plan has been produced by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division (EPD) based on data and information gathered by EPD, other state and federal agencies, universities, utilities, consultants, and environmental groups. A basin team made up of representatives from the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division (WRD), Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC), and EPD's Water Resources Branch, Water Protection Branch, and Geologic Survey Branch compiled the information to generate the plan. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the EPD Geologic Survey Branch created the majority of the figures in this report using geographic information system technologies.

## **River Basin Management Planning**

RBMP is designed to coordinate management of water quantity and quality within river basins by integrating activities across regulatory and non-regulatory programs (Appendix A). The RBMP approach provides the framework for identifying, assessing, and prioritizing water resources issues, developing management strategies, and providing opportunities for targeted, cooperative actions to reduce pollution, enhance aquatic habitat, and provide a dependable water supply. RBMP includes opportunities for stakeholders in the state's river basins to participate in developing and implementing

river basin management plans. These plans will benefit from the collective experience and combined resources of a variety of stakeholders.

## **Initial Efforts for the Ocmulgee River Basin**

Begun in 1993, RBMP is a new approach to the management of Georgia's water resources. This is the first river basin management plan produced under RBMP for the Ocmulgee River (Figure 1-1). Under the RBMP approach, the Ocmulgee River plan will be updated every five years.

## **What's Inside?**

This plan is organized into the following sections:

### **Executive Summary**

The executive summary provides a broad perspective on the condition of the basin and the management strategies recommended to protect and enhance the Ocmulgee River basin's water resources.

### **1.0 Introduction**

The introduction provides a brief description of Georgia's River Basin Management Planning approach, the planning cycle for the Ocmulgee River basin, opportunities for stakeholder involvement, and a description on how to use this document.

### **2.0 River Basin Characteristics**

This chapter provides a description of the basin and its important characteristics, including boundaries, climate, physiography and geology, geochemistry, soils, surface water resources, groundwater resources, biological resources, population and land use, local government and jurisdictions, and water use classifications.

### **3.0 Water Quantity**

This chapter describes current surface and groundwater availability, as well as forecasts for future demand. This chapter also includes sections on historic, current, and possible proposed permitting activities pertaining to water availability.

### **4.0 Environmental Stressors**

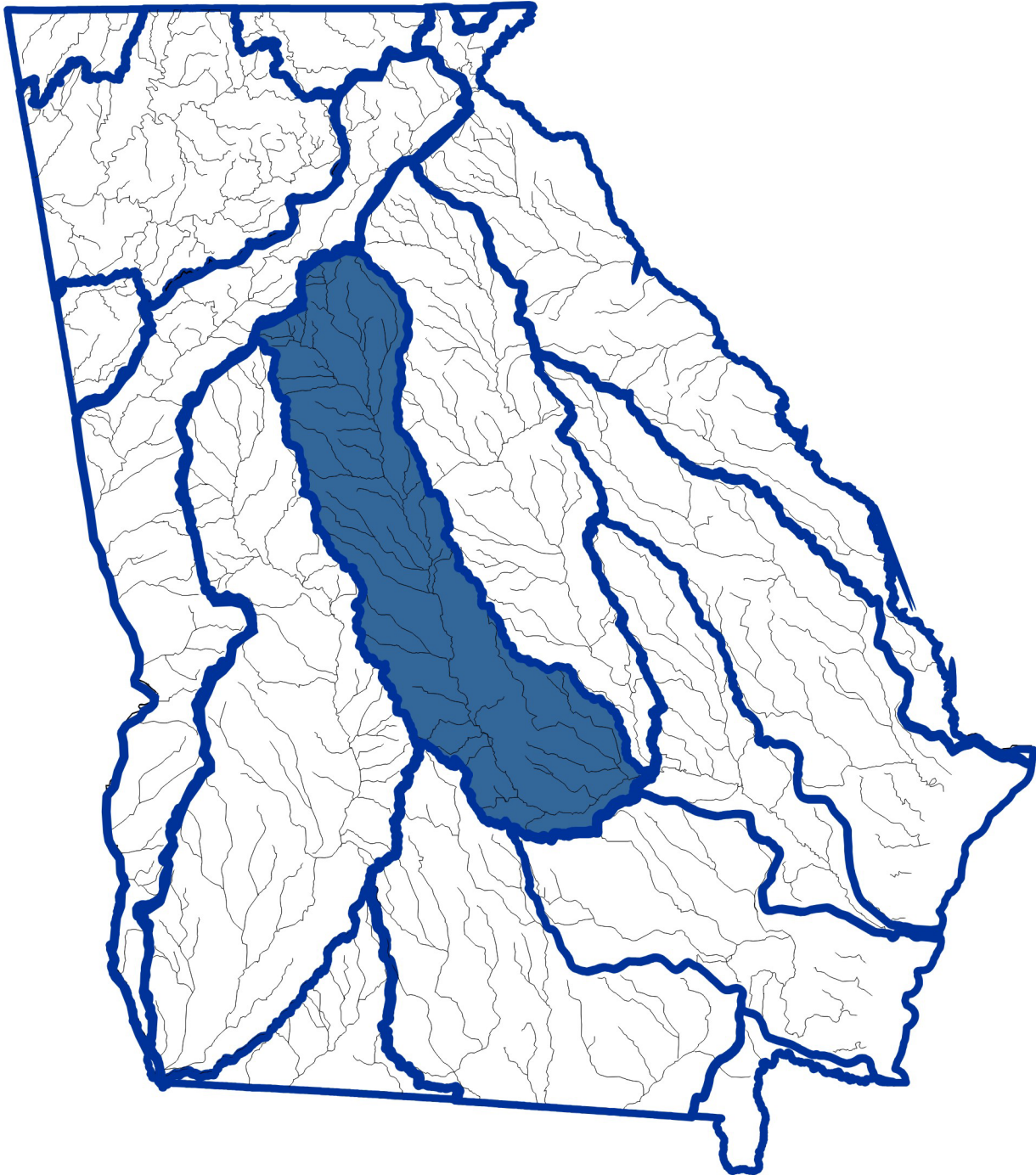
This chapter describes the major stressors in the basin that may impair water or habitat quality. The stressors are divided into point sources (i.e., National Pollutant Discharge System (NPDES) permitted discharges) and nonpoint sources.

### **5.0 Assessment**

This chapter provides an assessment of water quality and quantity in the streams, lakes, estuaries, and groundwater along with an assessment of the basin's biological integrity. The data sources and analysis techniques for these assessments are also discussed.

### **6.0 Concerns and Priority Issues**

This chapter summarizes and prioritizes the issues of concern that were identified through the assessment in Chapter 5.



**Figure I-1. The Ocmulgee River Basin**

## **7.0 Implementation Strategies**

This chapter presents strategies for addressing the issues of concern in the order that they appear on the priority list in Chapter 6 with a description of each issue, goals and objectives of management, overview of alternatives considered, and descriptions of recommended options for implementation.

## **8.0 Future Issues and Challenges**

This chapter discusses long-range goals to set the stage for further improvements in managing water resources and water quality. Due to limited resources (data, time, funding, etc.), some issues will be addressed in future iterations of each basin planning cycle.

## **Appendices**

The appendices contain technical information for those interested in specific details involved in the planning process.

## **How Do I Use This Plan?**

This river basin plan will serve as the road map for managing the water resources in the Ocmulgee River basin. It contains useful information on the health of the Ocmulgee River basin and recommended strategies to protect the basin now and in the future. The document can be used as a reference tool for watershed conditions in the basin, as well as a planning guide for implementing key guide actions throughout the basin cycle.

Chapter 7 contains the key management strategies that have been identified to address the priority issues and concerns in the basin. The earlier chapters show the reader how the issues were identified and where the specific stressors in the basin occur. Each chapter in this river basin plan builds upon the previous ones. For example, the recommended management strategies in Chapter 7 were formulated based on the priority concerns identified in Chapter 6. Similarly, the priority issues in Chapter 6 were derived as a result of the assessment in Chapter 5.

## **Links to Other Chapters**

Because issues are discussed across several chapters, an explanatory paragraph at the beginning of chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 will alert the reader that an issue may be discussed elsewhere. For example, Chapter 4 discusses stressors to the water body from various point and nonpoint sources. Chapter 5 provides an assessment summary of water quality and water quantity based on the sources of environmental stressors. Next, Chapter 6 combines the assessment information from Chapter 5 to identify priority issues for the development of management strategies. Finally, Chapter 7 provides general goals and strategies to address the most significant existing and future water quality and quantity issues within the Ocmulgee basin.

## What Is the Schedule of Activities for the Ocmulgee River Basin?

The schedules of activities for the first two Ocmulgee River basin cycles, i.e., 1998-2003 and 2003-2008, are provided in Figures 1-2 and 1-3.

Step	Action	Months	Year	
1. Organize Basin Team		Jan-Mar	1998	
2. Review Basin Planning Goals and Objectives		Apr-Jun	1998	
3. Compile and Review Preliminary Information/Data		Jul-Sep	1998	← Stakeholder Meeting
4. Develop Strategic Information Collection Plan		Oct-Dec	1998	
5a. Implement Monitoring Plan		Jan-Mar	1999	
5b. Compile Detailed Information/Data		Apr-Jun	1999	
		Jul-Sep	1999	
		Oct-Dec	1999	
		Jan-Mar	2000	
		Apr-Jun	2000	
6. Analyze and Evaluate Detailed Information		Jul-Sep	2000	
		Oct-Dec	2000	
		Jan-Mar	2001	
		Apr-Jun	2001	
7. Update Basin Assessment and Priority Issues List		Jul-Sep	2001	
8. Develop Strategies for Priority Issues		Oct-Dec	2001	
		Jan-Mar	2002	
		Apr-Jun	2002	
		Jul-Sep	2002	
		Oct-Dec	2002	
9. Prepare/Update Draft River Basin Plan		Jan-Mar	2003	
10. Agency and Public Review/Hearings		Apr-Jun	2003	← Stakeholder Meetings
		Jul-Sep	2003	
11. Finalize River Basin Plan		Oct-Dec	2003	
12. Implement River Basin Plan				

**Figure I-2. Ocmulgee River Basin Planning Schedule, 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle, 1998-2003**

Step	Action	Months	Year
1. Organize Basin Team	1. Organize Basin Team 2. Review Basin Planning Goals and Objectives 3a. Compile Preliminary Information/Data 3b. Review Preliminary Information/Data 4. Develop Strategic Information Collection Plan	Jan-Mar	2003
2. Review Basin Planning Goals and Objectives		Apr-Jun	
3a. Compile Preliminary Information/Data		Jul-Sep	
3b. Review Preliminary Information/Data		Oct-Dec	
4. Develop Strategic Information Collection Plan	5a. Implement Monitoring Plan 5b. Compile Detailed Information/Data	Jan-Mar	2004
5a. Implement Monitoring Plan		Apr-Jun	
5b. Compile Detailed Information/Data		Jul-Sep	
		Oct-Dec	
6. Analyze and Evaluate Detailed Information	6. Analyze and Evaluate Detailed Information	Jan-Mar	2005
		Apr-Jun	
7. Update Basin Assessment and Priority Issues List	8. Develop Strategies for Priority Issues	Jul-Sep	2006
8. Develop Strategies for Priority Issues		Oct-Dec	
		Jan-Mar	
		Apr-Jun	
9. Prepare/Update Draft River Basin Plan	10. Agency and Basin Team Review	Jul-Sep	2007
10. Agency and Basin Team Review		Oct-Dec	
11. Finalize River Basin Plan		Jan-Mar	
12. Implement River Basin Plan		Apr-Jun	
		Jul-Sep	2008
		Oct-Dec	
		Jan-Mar	
		Apr-Jun	

**Figure I-3. Ocmulgee River Basin Planning Schedule, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle, 2003-2008**

## How Do Stakeholders Get Involved in the Basin Planning Process?

A major goal of RBMP is to involve interested citizens and organizations in plan development and implementation. This is intended to improve the identification and prioritization of water quality and quantity problems, maximize the efficient use of resources and expertise, create better and more cost-effective management strategies, and be responsive to stakeholder perceptions and needs. The opportunities for stakeholders to get involved in river basin management planning include the following:

### Support the Basin Team

Every basin planning cycle begins with the organization of the basin team. Members of the basin team are from EPD programs and branches, and other interested governmental partners (e.g., the Department of Community Affairs, GFC, GSWCC, NRCS, and WRD). Emphasis is placed on technical knowledge, available resources, and potential implementation responsibilities. Other agencies may act as partners in the RBMP process, contributing resources and expertise, while not being directly involved in basin team activities. Stakeholders are encouraged to support and provide input to the agency that represents their interests.

## **Support the Local Advisory Committee**

The local advisory committees provide advice and counsel to EPD during river basin management plan development, representing a forum for involving local stakeholders. These committees form a link between EPD and the regulated community and local watershed interests.

The committees consist of local people representing a variety of stakeholder interests including local governments, agriculture, industry, forestry, environmental groups, land-owners, and citizens. Committee members and chairs are appointed by the EPD Director following a nomination process at the beginning of the initial river basin planning cycle. The committees meet periodically during the planning cycle, and provide input to EPD in the creation of river basin management plans. Meetings are called at the discretion of the chairman of the local advisory committee, and all meetings are open to the public. Table 1-1 lists the members of the Ocmulgee River Basin Local Advisory Committee serving for the first planning cycle.

## **Participate in Stakeholder Forums**

While River Basin Advisory Committees operate at the major basin level, there is an opportunity under RBMP for more localized stakeholder forums to play an important role in the creation and implementation of water resources management strategies. Some strategies, such as best management practices (BMPs) to control pollutant runoff from urban, agricultural or forestry areas, are best managed at the city, county, or subwatershed level. These local forums might already exist in the form of conservation districts or watershed associations, be associated with watershed groups convened by a Regional Development Center to develop TMDL implementation plans, or may be created as an outgrowth of RBMP.

## **Attend a Stakeholder Meeting**

The RBMP approach includes stakeholder meetings, which provide the opportunity for the general public to learn about the status of water-related issues and management activities in their river basin, as well as contribute input that can influence basin management planning.

Figure 1-2 shows the timing of stakeholder meetings that have been held as part of the Ocmulgee basin RBMP cycle. EPD hosted an initial stakeholder meeting in Macon, Georgia in late 1998 to invite and encourage stakeholder input early in the planning process for the Ocmulgee River basin. Focused monitoring in the Ocmulgee River basin was conducted in 1999. The data was assessed in 2000 and waters not meeting water quality standards were identified. Total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) were drafted and public noticed for waters not meeting water quality standards in June 2001. Input was considered, changes made as appropriate, and the TMDLs were finalized and approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in early 2002. The Regional Development Commissions (RDCs) in the Ocmulgee River basin initiated the development of TMDL Implementation Plans. Stakeholder meetings were coordinated by the RDCs to solicit input on the problem areas and support in completing the implementation plans. The plans are scheduled for completion in August 2003.

**Table I-I. Ocmulgee River Basin Local Advisory Committee Members**

Ms. Linda Castleberry Georgia Power Company Bin 10221 241 Ralph McGill Boulevard, N.E. Atlanta, Georgia 30308	Ms. Margo Howse DeKalb County Public Works Department Water and Sewer Division 1580 Roadhaven Drive Stone Mountain, Georgia 30083	Mr. Humber Ingram P.O. Box 4201 Eatonton, Georgia 31024
Mr. Robin W. Morton Dry Branch Kaolin Company Route 1, Box 468D Dry Branch, Georgia 31020	Mr. David P. Muse P.O. Box 35 2128 Hwy 341 North Perry, Georgia 31069	Mr. John Thomas Rocker Middle Georgia Timber P.O. Box 4030 Eatonton, Georgia 31024
Mr. Tony Rojas Executive Director Macon Water Authority P.O. Box 108 Macon, Georgia 31202	Atlanta Regional Commission 40 Courtland Avenue Atlanta, Georgia 30303	McIntosh Trail RDC Post Office Box 818 120 North Hill Street Griffin, Georgia 30224-0801
Heart of Georgia-Altamaha RDC 5405 Oak Street Eastman, Georgia 31023	Northeast Georgia RDC 305 Research Drive Athens, Georgia 30605	Middle Georgia RDC 175-C Emery Highway Macon, Georgia 31201

## What's Next?

This draft plan will be reviewed by governmental partners, the Ocmulgee River Basin Advisory Committee, and the public. Public meetings will be held to solicit comments and recommendations regarding the river basin management plan. Following the review, appropriate modifications will be made to the plan, and the final plan will be submitted for review and acceptance by the Board of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. After approval and an initial implementation period, partners will enter into the next 5-year cycle iteration to evaluate and update the plan as necessary.